

North Carolina Department of Transportation
Service Planning Task Order Consultant Services Contract
NCDOT KFH Contract #7000008306
PO Number 6300028774
11-PL-009 WBS 36233.145.1.1

KFH Project Number 2720.9
North Carolina Statewide Regionalization Study

Progress Report as of 3/1/12

Activities to Date:

The study effort has made significant progress transitional delays following the notice to proceed. Activities to this point include data collection from previous studies, completion of interviews with stakeholders and transit system management at regional systems in North Carolina, contacts with other states that have focused on regionalizing transit (seeking lessons learned), an Advisory Committee meeting, analysis of data NCDOT system data, and analysis of benefits and issues. All of this has been documented in an interim report, which has been provided to NCDOT.

Specific activities have included:

- **Previous Studies:** The study team obtained and reviewed in depth the 2002 NCDOT study Regionalizing Public Transportation Services. The study team interviewed the lead author at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University. In addition the study team obtained and reviewed a recent Transit Cooperative Research Program. (TCRP) report Regional Organizational Models for Public Transportation. We also identified a number of studies performed in North Carolina supporting efforts to develop regional systems, and we have obtained some of them for review, and are seeking copies of the remaining studies. The recommendations of the 2002 study have been documented in the Interim Report.
- **Stakeholder and NC Transit System Interviews:** The scope allowed for additional data collection from stakeholders with particular experience or perspective, and from transit operators not selected to be on the Advisory Committee. An interview guide was developed in December, and once agreement was reached with NCDOT on the parties to be interviewed, this process began. All of the originally planned interviews have been completed. We have allowed for the possibility of interviews with one or more legislators, but no individuals have been identified as of yet.
- **Definitions and Transit Program Context:** The study team focused on the definitions of regional transit and consolidated transit as contained in the Legislative Directive, comparing them to the classification of transit systems used currently by the Public Transportation Division (PTD). System coverage by type has been

mapped. In addition, descriptive text of the current program classifications, existing statutes regarding the formation of regional transit authorities, and local options for dedicated transit funding has been developed.

- **Lessons Learned from Other States:** The study team drafted an information request that was distributed by PTD through the Multi-State Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) of the Standing Committee on Public Transportation (SCOPT) of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). This organization includes the program managers for public transit in all the state departments of transportation. This request outlined North Carolina's study, and requested states to provide any input as soon as possible. In addition the study team identified states known to be involved in regionalizing public transit. Four states responded to the request. Consequently and based on other available information, six interviews have been conducted with Iowa, Massachusetts, New Mexico and Pennsylvania; with additional research has included follow-up calls to Texas. We understand that there has been an ongoing regionalization effort in Kansas, which we need to follow up on, and have recently learned of pending legislation in Michigan to provide incentives to local transit systems to regionalize. We have obtained the Michigan draft legislation, and will follow-up on it as well. .
- **Benefits, Issues and Challenges:** In preparation for the initial Advisory Committee meeting, the study team developed information from the previous studies, interviews, and previous experience regarding the potential benefits of regionalization/consolidation, issues, and challenges.
- **Advisory Committee:** Together with NCDOT staff, an Advisory Committee was identified to assist in providing input and reacting to proposals. This Committee was invited to a meeting held on February 8. The meeting was in a four-hour workshop format. An extensive Power Point presentation was used to inform Committee members regarding the legislative study request, the input needed from them, and the research conducted to this point. Committee members provided significant input, and a summary has been developed. Future Advisory Committee meetings are scheduled for March 19 and April 16, 2012.
- **Input from Transit Systems and Regional Planners:** Following the initial Advisory Committee meeting, the presentation provided to the Advisory Committee was sent by PTD to all transit systems in the state (and subsequently forwarded to regional planning organizations), with a request that they address the key questions:
 1. What are the benefits, issues, and challenges of regionalizing or consolidating?
 2. What should be the basis for defining the boundaries of regional systems?
 3. What incentives or policies are needed to make regionalizing easier or more beneficial?

To date there have responses (some quite extensive) from over 17 systems,

- **Interim Report:** An Interim Report has been completed, documenting the current status of regionalization of transit in North Carolina, summarizing lessons learned

from the stakeholder interviews, the Advisory Committee, the transit operators, and from the other states. The relationship of the current funding programs and organizational structure of transit systems has been partially documented as it relates to the regional structure, using funding data from PTD and the Operating Statistics compiled by ITRE for NCDOT. Key benefits and issues have been identified and included in the interim report. The report has been provided to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee by NCDOT.

Next Steps:

Having identified the benefits, issues and potential opportunities at this point, the major focus will be on developing short term action opportunities, and implementation strategies that will provide incentives for the development of regional or consolidated transit systems, while addressing the challenges or barriers that have been identified. NCDOT anticipates continuing its work on this topic to provide a complete report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee by May 1.